

DPW UPDATE

August 2002

Department Meets, Exceeds FY 01-02 Goals

By Jessica Eslinger, Staff Writer

During Fiscal Year 2001-02, DPW met or exceeded its goals on projects and services. This includes every DPW division. Here are some highlights:

DPW crews removed five times the amount of debris since last year from County roads and drainage ways, and reduced risks of sewage stoppages and spills by improving wastewater vandalism deterrence procedures.

Micro-turbines were installed at Jamacha Landfill to convert methane to electricity. New recycling centers were initiated in Jacumba and Ranchita.

DPW completed a two-year effort to identify and evaluate 12,823 culverts and drop inlets. For the fourth consecutive year, Land Development plan and map checks were performed in less than 10 calendar days.

Following September 11, Airports Management worked with the Federal Aviation Administration to protect against terrorist activity; they worked with the National Guard and then County Sheriff's Department for armed guards at Palomar, installed new detection equipment and established extra security measures. At Ramona Airport, the runway was extended to make room for larger firefighting aircraft.

In order to keep traffic signals working in the event of a power outage, the department completed installation of 130 battery backup systems. One hundred sixty County roads were resurfaced, 10,500 feet of guardrail were installed, and 100 percent of reported potholes were repaired by the next working day.

After the Fallbrook fire in February, DPW provided traffic control and clean-up support in addition to repairing fire damage to the De Luz Bridge.

DPW relocated 10 sections, reducing 13,000 square feet of leased-space expenditures, and saving \$280,000 annually.

Other financial support has come to DPW in the form of grants. Overall, DPW saved the County \$38.4 million.



SATISFACTION SURVEY A PLUS

Results are in and they look good. The Employee Satisfaction Survey for 2001 reflects a trend of substantial improvement among County employees.

"The annual Employee Satisfaction Survey tells us how we're doing and where we need improvement," said DPW Director John Snyder. "By using employee feedback, we've made many positive changes to DPW."

Topping the list, 94 percent of employees feel quality customer service is a priority in DPW.

A majority of respondents think they are treated fairly by the department and that top management is easily accessible for questions and concerns. Seventy-four percent of respondents say their supervisors are doing a great job, up 20 percent since 1997.

Regarding safety, 92 percent of respondents say the department emphasizes job safety, up 21 percent since 1997, and a majority of respondents think department rules and regulations are applied consistently.

Training opportunities have more than doubled since 1997. There is a 13 percent increase in career development opportunities since 2000, and employees are 12 percent more satisfied with training programs.

Seventy-two percent of employees are satisfied with the County as an employer, up 16 percent from last year.

"The trend of the December 2001 survey is more positive across the board than the year before and this is great to see," said Snyder. "But even though survey results are higher, some issues are rated lower than others. We can see the need to further improve getting the right resources in place so we can get our work done better. Also, we need to do more to improve communications in all ways, including having more opportunities for input into how work gets done and how results can be improved."

"I appreciate employees taking the time to complete the surveys so we can see where improvements are needed," said Snyder.

Two hundred twenty-five DPW employees completed the 44-question survey during November and December of 2001.

Hot Enough For Ya?

By Jack E. Thompson, Departmental Safety Coordinator

Many of us spend some part if not all of our workday in a hot environment. We often face conditions, that pose special hazards to safety and health known as “heat stress.”

Temperature, humidity, radiant heats (such as from the sun or a furnace) and air velocities are the four environmental factors that contribute to heat stress. Older workers, obese workers and those taking certain types of medications are also at greater risk. While sweating is the natural method the body uses to maintain a stable internal temperature it is only effective if the humidity level is low enough to permit evaporation and if the fluids and salts lost are adequately replaced.

Most heat-related health problems can be prevented by following a few basic precautions.

- 1. Acclimatization to the heat** through short exposures followed by longer periods of work in the hot environment can reduce heat stress.
- 2. Engineering controls**, such as using power tools to reduce manual labor, and using personal cooling devices are other ways to reduce heat exposure.
- 3. Work practices** such as providing a period of acclimatization for new workers and providing plenty of drinking water -- as much as a quart per hour -- at the workplace can help reduce the risk of heat stress disorders.
- 4. Alternating work and rest periods** with rest periods in a cool area can help you avoid heat stress. If possible, heavy work should be scheduled during the cooler parts of the day.
- 5. Employee education** is vital. Be sure to replace fluids and salt lost through sweat and learn to recognize dehydration, exhaustion, fainting, heat cramps, salt deficiency, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke.

While we can't control Mother Nature we can educate ourselves and follow these basic guidelines to protect ourselves from the potentially life threatening effects of heat stress disorders.

DIVISION NEWS

Management Services

Update Wins International Award

DPW Update won big at the 2002 Awards for Publication Excellence (APEX). “Wheelbarrow Man,” by Public Information Officer Bill Polick, received the Feature Series Writing Award.

The two-part series documents the journey of Porter Perrin Wheaton as he surveyed 2,328 miles of San Diego County roads with a wheelbarrow full of camping gear and an odometer.



Update shared the award with national organizations such as Walt Disney Company, American Red Cross, Arthritis Foundation, Blue Shield and others.

The International APEX Awards are based on excellence in graphic design, editorial content and overall success in achieving communications effectiveness. The fourteenth annual competition attracted 5,863 entries – 938 of which were writing submissions.

Transportation Services

Structures Crew

Imagine working surrounded by 40,000 pounds of raw hot dogs; or battling frigid winter weather to complete your job.

Those are just some of the obstacles Gary Giardina and his Road Structures crew face as they maintain bridges, sidewalks, walls, guardrails and other items throughout the County. Based at the Lakeside Road Station, their work covers structures from the Mexican border to the Riverside County line and the Pacific Ocean to Imperial County.

“We had a truck loaded with hot dogs crash on Montezuma Grade this year,” Giardina said. “That was a pretty unusual place to work at the time. But most of our jobs are fixing guardrails damaged by motorists.”

One of those repair jobs was done during a heavy snowstorm near Julian. A truck knocked down a bridge guardrail and closed Wynola Road for a week.

“That was a difficult job, it was cold and the bridge was frozen. It took us a week to repair the bridge and that was probably to worst elements I’ve worked in,” he said.

Giardina supervises the six-person crew, which includes Reyes Durazo, Sam Moton, Gary Paredes, Roger Robledo and Larry Whattoff.

There are days when the crew doesn’t know what it’ll be doing until they show up for work. Giardina says they may have one job planned but something more important comes along that needs to be dealt with immediately. Safety, he says, is the key factor in prioritizing work.



Gary Giardina (left) and Sam Moton repair a rock wall on Mt. Helix.

Program Sets National Example

Thanks to DPW's improved stormwater pollution prevention program, San Diego County won an Achievement Award from the National Association of Counties (NACo), and is listed in their directory of exemplary counties.

Our increase in Best Management Practices (BMPs) significantly reduced stormwater pollution on County property and permitted private construction sites.

Two new crews were established for clean up and BMP installation efforts. Wash racks were installed at County facilities, and other improvements were made to ensure proper wastewater disposal at sites throughout the County.

Each year, NACO Achievement Awards recognize counties nationwide for their successful initiation, development and accomplishment of public service projects.

For DPW, One is Better Than Two

San Diego County's population grows at a rapid pace – not surprisingly, so has the wear and tear on our County roadways.

Divisions I and II used to issue independent contracts for repairing and repaving County roads.

Last fiscal year, support came in the form of a \$14,708,000 grant, collected from State gas taxes. The divisions combined powers to take advantage of this large sum, and together, contracted the work out.

Construction Engineering staff monitored the contract, making sure the money was used in an effective and appropriate manner. They report 100 percent completion of proposed work and boast record tons of AC overlay. In FY 2001-02, 166,380 tons of AC overlay account for nearly 100 miles of roadway.